

# When God Changes Your Plans

*www.truthcommunitychurch.org*

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Proverbs 16:9  
**Preached on:** Sunday, October 3, 2010

**The GraceLife Pulpit**  
28001 Harrison Parkway  
Valencia, CA 91355-4190

**Website:** [www.thegracelifepulpit.com](http://www.thegracelifepulpit.com)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/gracelifepulpit](http://www.sermonaudio.com/gracelifepulpit)

Well, it's a wonderful privilege for me to represent Grace to You this evening to Grace Community Church. I've been at Grace to You for almost 15 years and I want to especially thank the staff of Grace church and the elders of Grace Community Church for just a tremendous partnership in ministry. These men are a delight to work with, to know, to be friends with, to say nothing about the daily relationships I enjoy with our staff at Grace to You, but I would especially want to thank you, the congregation of Grace Community Church, for the role that you play in the ministry of Grace to You. I'm sure you don't really think about it that way but the truth of the matter is that your lives set a context for our pastor's preaching and his ministry which Grace to You takes and spreads around the world, and the faithfulness of this congregation is what sets the context for all of the ministry that flows through radio and television and the internet and the books and other aspects of the ministry of Grace to You. So on behalf of our 50 staff members, all of whom are members of Grace Community Church and involved in ministry here, thank you for what you make possible through the ministry of Grace to You. There would be no joy in our work at all if it weren't for the partnership that we have with the leadership and the congregation of Grace to You. So on behalf of our staff, please know how very grateful we are and that for me personally it's a great privilege to be here this evening.

Now, it's odd in one sense that I'm saying that because the truth of the matter is, if I had had my way originally, I would not be here tonight. I would have nothing to do with Grace to You if I had had my way originally. You see, I've been at Grace to You since 1996 and when I started there, I was a seminary student at the Masters Seminary and I never intended to make Grace to You my career as it has turned out to be. In fact, I originally did not want to work at Grace to You at all. It was the last thing on earth that I wanted to do. You see, when I interviewed at Grace to You the first time, I was simultaneously interviewing for another secular position that at the time seemed more prestigious and was certainly better paying than what I was being offered at Grace to You, and on top of that, just between us friends here, my first interview at Grace to You didn't go too hot. They had their doubts about me, let's say, and I had my doubts about them. We simply did not click at all in that first meeting and so I settled it in my mind, this is true, not that I need to emphasize that, but I settled it in my mind as I was driving home from that interview, "I am not going to work at Grace to You. I'm going to take this

other job and I'm going to put Grace to You in my rearview mirror and never look back." Well, before I had a chance to communicate my final decision to my predecessor at Grace to You, my secular job fell through. That was a sure thing and it fell through before I had a chance to say anything about it and as the Lord would have it, Grace to You graciously invited me back for a second interview to see if I could get it right the second time, I guess, and that interview went better than the first one and they extended the offer and I got this job as a counselor answering mail for John MacArthur back in 1996, July 25, 1996, to be precise, and I've been there ever since.

It's true to say that I ended up at Grace to You against my own will, and going even a little bit further, my friends, there is a sense in which I have stayed at Grace to You against my will. My training in seminary was designed to put me in a pastorate, or so I thought, a pastor of a local church someplace. Leavenworth, Kansas for all I know, whatever is in Leavenworth, Kansas. In multiple times in the past I tried to leave Grace to You to pursue opportunities to be a pastor and nothing ever worked out, and I had this sense from my training as a seminary student, that I should be moving toward pastoral ministry and yet every time that I tried that, the door was shut and it never worked out and eventually I became very frustrated by that ongoing turn of events, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2007, and I was living life with this gnawing question in the back of my mind: was I failing God by making my living in what's essentially an administrative position at a nonprofit organization? Should I be trying harder to end up in a local church someplace? Had God's will passed me by? And I've got to tell you, those years of wrestling with those questions were torture. Those are torturous questions for a seminary graduate to deal with and some of you didn't help, "Why aren't you going to a local church?" Thanks so much for that encouragement.

Listen, this was a dilemma that was ongoing for several years and it took some serious biblical thinking to resolve that dilemma and to see it from the proper perspective. Let me quickly say, since my immediate boss, Phil Johnson, is in the audience here, that I am so delighted now to be at Grace to You. Honestly, there is no place else that I would rather be. I am not looking for other ministry. If I live and die at Grace to You and at Grace Community Church, I will be a man most richly blessed, but it's only now that I realize that within a matter of the past two or three years that I've really come to see this from the right perspective. I now realize that this is where God has led me and this is where God has blessed me.

Now, my point tonight is not to rehearse a personal testimony to you. That's only by way of introduction. I really don't care about my personal testimony here as I'm standing here. My point tonight, the desire of my heart tonight is pastoral for you. What I want to do is to speak to those of you who had one idea of the way you wanted life to go up to this point only to find that nothing worked out the way that you had planned either. Life has brought you disappointment. Your relationships have brought sorrow rather than joy. You failed where you thought for sure you were going to succeed. Your health failed early in life and never came back. Death came to someone that you loved before you were ready to say goodbye. And I would venture to say if we bowed our heads and closed our eyes and raised hands, which we're not going to do, that there are a lot of people in

this room tonight that could say with Job, Job 17:11, "My days are past, my plans are torn apart, Even the wishes of my heart."

Well, tonight the word of God is going to give us a context to resolve those doubts about our past, those regrets about the past, a context through which to see the unfulfilled plans of life and restore us to a sense where we're looking to the future with absolute confidence and with a sense of being able to leave those regrets behind and accepting them as part of the grace of God, even, in our lives. And to do that, I want to direct your attention to the book of Proverbs 16. So I invite you to turn there. Proverbs 16:9 is going to be the foundational text for our ministry this evening. Proverbs 16:9 which says this,

9 The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

What I want to do tonight is help you to see how your plans intersect with trusting God. We all understand that we're supposed to trust God as we walk through this life, most of us do a fair measure of planning as we go through this life as well, the question is how do those things intersect and how do we understand it when our plans fail and go a different direction. That's what I want to think through with you tonight from the Scriptures and just to define our terms, I want you to understand how I'm using the word "plan" today, not that that necessarily needs a definition but I just want to lay it out to kind of get our minds all going the same direction. Here's what I mean when I talk about the word "planning," it's this: you plan when you use your mind to develop a proposed course of action with the means that you have at your disposal to achieve a result that you value. Planning is a mental activity. It's using your mind to chart out a course of action for the future that you want to follow with the hopes and with the desire that it's going to deliver a result that you think is important and so you devote your mind, your energy, your resources to achieving a plan. It's a rational activity by which you take the future into account as you act in the present.

It's a natural part of life from small details to an entire approach to living. You make a task list for the things that you want to get done in a particular day and so you plan out your day around your task list. You want your car to run well and so you follow the maintenance plan that the manufacturer sets forth in the owners manual. On a spiritual level, you want to read the Bible cover to cover. You say, "I believe the Bible is the word of God," and it occurs to you that if you really believe that, that it might be important to know what it actually says and so you find a Bible plan to follow that in one way or another will take you through every word of the sacred Scriptures. Planning, a result that you desire, something that you want to achieve in the future so you act now to make that happen. Well, our text today, Proverbs 16:9, will help you approach your plans for the day as well as to think through your deepest ambitions in life. The deepest desires that you have to honor God with your life in whatever area of service or avenue of opportunity that he gives to you, all of it is wrapped up in this one single text. And for those of you that have lived life long enough to see some of your plans fall through, to see God withhold things that you thought that he would give, even sadly to see how your own sin has compromised opportunity and forfeited opportunity that you otherwise

would have had, all of these things are wrapped up in the answer to those nagging questions of your heart are found in a proper approach to this text.

So there are three main points this evening that I want to lay out for you. We'll bounce a little bit away from Proverbs 16 but come back to it in the end. Three points for this evening, the first point if you want to take notes is this: that you should certainly plan. You should certainly plan. Now, it might seem like that doesn't even need to be said but the truth of the matter is that some people who claim to be Christians believe that planning is inconsistent with trusting God. Jesus said, "Don't worry about tomorrow, focus on today, so I'm just going to focus on what today has for me." But that's an abuse of Jesus' words in Matthew 6. Jesus was condemning anxiety, he was not condemning planning when he spoke in the Sermon on the Mount there. But in Proverbs 6, turn back to Proverbs 6, I just want you to see a little bit of the Bible's commendation of planning just to set the context for the other things that we have to say this evening.

Proverbs 6, beginning in verse 6, Solomon tells his son, "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest." In training his son for life, Solomon tells him, "Go and look at what the ant does. This ant is somehow self-motivated, this ant is somehow productive, this ant makes provision for the future in the way that it orders its life today." So the Bible uses the ant as an illustration to call us away from laziness and to call us to lead productive, self-motivated lives that plan for the future. You should be thinking about the future as you approach your life today.

Turn over to chapter 21 of the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 21:5 where it says, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty." Diligent planning leads to life advantage, the Bible says. And that's a general truth; it's not meant to exclude all possible exceptions which is the nature of Proverbs, but in general good planning leads to advantage that those who do not plan do not have. Impulsive behavior leads to poverty and God wove this into the moral order of the universe.

It's easy enough to think about that. One man and another man have the same job and the same basic income and the same basic expenses but the first man orders his life and saves \$200 a month, let's say. The other man values the opportunity to gather stuff and goes into debt at the rate of \$1,000 a month and has the outward appearance of prosperity beyond the first man. But you know the outcome of that. Check back in 10 years and evaluate who had the best long-term result consistently going forward. The advantage of planning. The Bible says there is benefit to that. There is diligence in planning that leads to a good result and it calls us to plan and to think about the future as we live out our lives today.

On a more eternal scope, you might say, the godly person not only plans his finances and the details of the day, the godly man plans his life. The godly man thinks about the eternal significance of life in the way that he approaches it. You see, brothers and sisters in Christ, you should be conscious in your approach to life of realizing that one day you

are going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account for the way that you have lived. Not an account for your sin, our sins have been forgiven when we put our faith in Christ, but he's going to evaluate your life and he is going to reward you according to the way that you've lived your life and the way you've taken advantage of your opportunities, and the only thing that possibly make sense for any of you to approach your life with is to realize that that day is most certainly going to come. 2 Corinthians 5:10, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

You're going to stand before Christ and give an account. It would be the utter depth of folly to not contemplate that, to not calculate that into the way that you approach your life. The wise man, the godly man, calculates that in and says, "Oh, there is a day of reckoning coming even though right now it seems far away, even though I don't know all of the details of what that's going to be like." The man who has a biblically informed view of life sees that coming and says, "I'm going to account for the way that I live. I'm going to take that into account by the way that I set my priorities today. I'm going to shape my life around the reality that I'm going to stand before Christ." And when I think that way, sin isn't nearly as attractive as it otherwise would be if I was only focused on the desires of the flesh right now. And the sacrifice of obedience, the sacrifice of service to Christ, the setting of your affections on Christ in light of that certain time to come, seems like the most glorious and wise and prudent thing to do. You calculate the future, you plan for that future day of standing before Christ in the way that you structure life today.

That's what a godly man does, he plans for it. Moses said in Psalm 90:12, reflecting that eternal perspective, he prays and he says, "teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom." "O God, give me the grace to think beyond what is right in front of my nose. Help me to recognize the brevity of life and the eternal significance of living in your presence, the eternal significance of being accountable to you, O God, and let that factor in and filter into the way that I live every day of my life." If you've never thought that way, you need to be stopped in your tracks, you need to stop what you're doing and think about life seriously and calculate that. And all the more, if you've never put your faith in Christ, never truly repented of sin and submitted your life to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of your soul, that is the only thing in life that matters.

So whether we look at it from a daily perspective or from an eternal perspective, you should certainly plan. You should plan because God commands planning in his word and God commends planning in his word. He commands it in order to bless you. You plan and you experience the blessing of good and wise planning, and if you're like me, you want the blessing of God on your life. That's the only thing that matters. I want the blessing of God on my life no matter what that looks like, don't you? I mean, that's why you're here on a Sunday night, isn't it? Well, part of seeking and receiving his blessing is the idea of planning.

Secondly, point number 2 tonight, not only should you certainly plan, point 2, I like this point, that's why I put it in the notes, I guess. Point 2: you should plan confidently. You

should plan confidently. If you are a true Christian, you should have the greatest possible confidence as you look forward to the future.

Let me remind you of another important passage in Proverbs that many of you take as your life verse, Proverbs 3. Turn back there with me very quickly, if you would. Proverbs 3:5 and 6, a verse not directly about planning but about the mindset with which you plan. Proverbs 3:5-6, you can probably recite it by heart. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." At the core of trust in God, really, is confidence. You trust God, meaning that you have confidence in what the future is going to bring because you know the living God and you know that he is going to be good to you because you belong to him through faith in Christ Jesus. You're confident about the future. Your confidence speaks to your understanding and your trust in the goodness and faithfulness of God to his children. So Christians should be confident about the future – get this – we're confident about the future not because we know what's going to happen in the details of our lives as it works out, but we are confident because it is our heavenly Father who holds and directs and determines the future. It's not in the events of the future but it's in the person behind the future, the person who is unfolding his plan for history in every detail. And we know him and we love him and we trust him and so we trust and we look forward to the future and we plan with confidence because we know that as one of the children of our heavenly Father, the only way it can possibly come out for us is good in the end.

I haven't always lived that way and I bet you haven't either, but that is the birthright, that is the privilege and that is the responsibility of every true Christian to be confident about the future. Stated differently in the context of planning, we don't plan because we're afraid of the future. We don't stockpile goods and look for a hole to hide in in case the apocalypse comes or, you know, the next variation of the Y2K phenomenon comes down the pike. No, we don't plan because we're afraid, we plan in confidence because God calls us to plan and we seek his blessing. We seek to live in obedience to him as he says, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage." Well, we say, "Well, if that's what you want, Lord, then I'm going to plan my approach to life. I'm going to plan my day. I'm going to order things so that I can position myself for the maximum blessing from you because I believe your goodness and I believe your promise and I trust your wisdom and I'm not going to go through life haphazardly and I'm not going to go through life fearfully either."

One of the candidates for baptism earlier quoted Romans 8:28. I don't know if she saw my sermon notes or not. I don't think so. But we know that, "God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." That's the context in which you plan. That's the context in which you think about life if you're going to approach life biblically at all. You say, "This comes out good in the end and so whatever the apparent detours, the seeming detours might be along the way, I'm confident in a good final outcome for me because God saved me in order to bless me. God saved me in order to be an instrument of his glory. God saved me and has reserved for me a place in heaven that no one can take away." As Phil preached this

morning, nothing is going to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It comes out good in the end. It can't come out any other way. So you as a Christian should be marked by a robust confidence in the future and your planning is done from confidence about God's ultimate goodness upon you, not trying to calculate every bad thing that could happen and then shield yourself from a position of weakness. No, we plan, we live in a position of confidence in God's goodness. We trust him with all of our heart. We acknowledge him in all of our ways with an utter certainty in the most depth of our hearts that he's going to direct our steps to bless us.

Is that where your heart is at? Is that what you believe? To the extent that there is a gap between what the Bible calls us to and where you know your heart to be, the margin of that is your opportunity for spiritual growth. Those margins and those things that concern you and worry you and trouble you and give you anxiety, that margin is where you need to focus like a laser beam and say, "That is where the spiritual opportunity for this coming week is for me. I need to change from anxiety to confidence. I need to go back to the promises of my good God. I need to go back to the reality of the love of my Lord Jesus Christ. Who am I to question whether there is any possibility that the future is going to be anything other than wonderful for me in the end?" You appropriate, as it were, God's perfect faithfulness to his children into your entire view of life.

We affirm, most of you would quickly affirm, God is faithful. Well, that's right. That's proper biblical thinking. God is good. God is faithful. But what you have to do as a Christian is you need to take it, as it were, you need to pull that down from heaven and into your heart in a way that says, "Because God is faithful and because I am one of his children, I see the absolute certainty of this result. God is going to be good and faithful to me." Just as the Apostle Paul spoke about the death of Christ and he said, "He loved me and gave himself up for me," first person singular, just as the Apostle Paul says that about salvation, about the work of Christ on his behalf, "It was for me." And in receiving Christ, we take that same thing. "Yes, Christ died for sinners but, oh, the glory of it all is that he died for me. I appropriate that personally. I believe that God had me in mind, Christ had me in mind on the cross. And now going forward with the forgiveness of sins, with the full justification of God on my account, now I look to his faithfulness and I affirm the intrinsic nature of his character that he is faithful in general which means in particular he is going to be faithful to me. He is going to be good. Even if I don't quite see how this or that sadness fits into that right now, I'm looking, as it were, I'm standing and I'm looking over the circumstance and I'm seeing a certain outcome. Even though I can't define the details for you, there is no doubt in my mind that God is going to be good to me in the end. He's going to be so good to me in the end that my tongue isn't even going to be able to express it. I'm not going to have the language, I certainly don't have the language now, to magnify God for the greatness of the faithfulness that he's going to show to me throughout all of the halls of the eons of eternity."

And if you're a Christian, that's true of you too and so start thinking that way. Start having your affections shaped by that and start having your confidence and trust shaped by the infinite faithfulness of God to his children. He will not break his promise and there is no possibility whatsoever that any one of us that truly know Christ are going to come

to the end, are going to enter into heaven and say, "Oh, this is not what I thought. This just, man, I thought it would be so much better." That's not going to happen. That's impossible. The faithfulness of God will be on full display in such grandeur and such greatness that you will be overwhelmed at the reality of it. That is what's going to happen and so take that and pull it into life today and say, "I am confident about what comes."

That is the basis on which you plan confidently. You plan in light of the knowledge of the goodness and the character of God. You can plan confidently. For some of you young people just at the start of life, as it were, on the front end of all of your plans, plan big. Plan with confidence and as you do, trust your Father to direct your plans even if they work out differently than what you imagine now, what you plan now. Just plan with a sense, approach your life with a sense, those of you that know Christ at a young age, those of you that are on the front end of life and your dreams are all in front of you, factor the goodness and faithfulness of God right into the heart of the way that you think about life and trust what the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 11, verse 6, that, "he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." If you're seeking God as your general approach to life tonight, understand that there is a certain reward that is the outcome of your search, of your faithfulness, of your obedience, of your trust even in the sorrows of life. He rewards those who seek him. He will not break his word. He is going to be good in the end.

Truth be told if we looked around and we looked in the right places, we would affirm it right now that right here, right where I'm at right now, he's being awfully good to me now and it only gets better. That's at the heart of true faith. That's the heart of trusting God. Trust him with all your heart, not leaning on your own understanding but residing all of your repose and all of your confidence in his perfect faithful character that says, "I'll trust that even when everything I see seems to contradict it."

Your trials don't contradict the faithfulness of God but the reality of it is that as we go through life, we do have to respond to disappointed plans. The reality of it is, and it seems superfluous to even make this point, that your plans don't always work out. Your hopes, your desires for family, for life, for career, sometimes when you're thinking it's going to work out one way and it comes back and it's zero from what you had planned, how do you respond to that? How do you think about that? How do you process that in your thinking as you go through life 20, 30, 50 years as a Christian and you look back and say, "Man, it wasn't what I thought it was going to be." How do you respond to that? The key is this, point 3 this evening: you should plan dependently. You should plan dependently. You should certainly plan, you should plan confidently but in the end you plan dependently. One writer said this talking about Proverbs 16:9, he said, "Man proposes, but God disposes." We are on the front end and we look toward the future and we say, "This is the plan that I have. This is the course of action I'm going to take. This is the outcome that I hope to achieve." And yet as you go through life, one thing happens and providence intervenes in a different place and unexpected setbacks come back and you end up in a much different place than what you planned on. How do you think about that? How do you respond to that?



Go back to our text for this evening, Proverbs 16:9. I want you to see it again on the text on your lap as we deal with this point. Proverbs 16:9, "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps." Here's what we all have to come to grips with in our plans of life, the way that we think about the unexpected turns of life, and you do this on the front end, you are conscious of this on the front end as you're making your plans and it's this: is that your plans cannot guarantee the result. Nothing that you plan, you can't guarantee the outcome of a single one of your plans, and you factor that in. Your plans are subject to change because as the sovereign of the universe, God reserves the prerogative, as it were, to say yes or no. God reserves the prerogative to either bless your plans or let them go according to what you thought or to utterly change the direction into something else.

Stated differently, here's a good word for you and you must approach life this way: all of your plans are provisional. They are provisional. You hold them, as it were, with an open palm that says, "This is what I'm thinking. This is my plan. These are the desires of my heart." As the Lord prayed in Gethsemane, you pray and you approach all of life this way, "Father, not my will but thine be done." So much heartache would have been avoided in my life if I had just understood that and lived that way from the start of my Christian life but so many times I just clutched onto them, clutched onto my plans for this or that relationship or this or that opportunity or this or that whatever, and it had to be my way or I wasn't going to be happy about it. Well, I have felt the sting of the Lord's discipline over the years teaching me not to clench when I plan but to just unfold it and say, "Lord, not my will but thine be done." The outworking of his providence is always going to be better than anything you planned in the first place anyway. Your plans are provisional.

Turn over a page or two to Proverbs 19:21 and then we'll step into the New Testament for a moment as well. Proverbs 19:21, "Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand." We understand the sovereign purposes of God in the sense that we understand that he will accomplish his will as history unfolds, and we defer to that, we yield to that.

And in our own personal lives, turn over to the books of James 4, a different baptismal candidate was stealing my thunder earlier, referring to James 4. I need to talk to Justin M. and interview these candidates for what they did to steal my thunder, as it were. Actually, that's just an affirmation of what the Lord would direct our attention to. James 4:13, talking about the provisional nature of our plans, that you plan dependently, "Not my will but thine be done." James 4:13, you know the passage, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'" They had their plans and not only did they have their plans, they had the outcome ordained. Verse 14, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" It's not so much the verbal words that James is calling us to but the heart attitude of dependence on the outworking of the providence of God and the recognition that our plans are

provisional, our plans are subject to the intervention of divine providence that makes them go much differently than we expected.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as you plan your day, as you plan your life, as you hope for your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren, you must be conscious of divine providence when you plan. God will bring the unexpected to change direction. Yes, God blesses prudent planning but your plans do not place him under obligation to you. Your plans do not determine the result. Now listen to read very carefully: that reality which I think most of you would affirm and understand, that reality affects the manner in which you trust God. It affects how you trust God. It affects your perspective on what it is that you are trusting God for. I deal with this question in counseling from time to time, people are disappointed in life, "I was trusting God to do this or that. I was trusting God to give me a mate and it never happened. I was trusting God for a job and it's three years now and I haven't found work." The problem at the core of that is that when you speak that way, you're showing that you're trusting God for the wrong thing. You do not trust God that your specific plans will come to pass because they may not. That's the whole point of James 4. They may not come to pass and so you are not trusting God that he's going to give energy and bring everything that you plan to pass because that's not the way life works and the Bible doesn't tell us to expect that, rather what you trust God for is you trust him for his character. You trust him for his goodness. You trust him that he will ultimately bless you in whatever comes to pass even if it was something that was totally outside the realm of your conscious recognition of what might be possible. When death intervenes, as it has in our family over the years at unexpected times, when financial reversal intervenes, when relationships fail, understand that that doesn't affect the core of why you trust God. You trust him for his ultimate goodness, not that a particular temporal result will take place and that is so wonderfully liberating because then you have rooted your trust and your confidence in the eternal character of God, not in circumstances which you know in the depths of your heart are subject to change at any time, and you are freed from worrying about how this or that might intervene and disrupt what you really hope for. Instead you realize that there is a transcendent nature to the core of my trusting God that cannot be affected by what happens around me. Death can't take it away. Illness can't take it away. Financial reversal can't take it away because I trust in him with all my heart and I don't lean on my understanding for what that means.

The way that works out, the way that you should think about your failed plans of the past, the way that you should think as you're going forward as a young person, is that you are open to change as your life unfolds. You're open to change. You don't resist it, you don't fight against it, you understand that change is one of the primary ways that God works out his providence in your life. You embrace that. You embrace little change, you embrace dramatic change.

Whatever the case is, your plans are provisional and you depend on him as life goes forward. Sometimes he gives to you beyond what you could ask or think. Some of you, a few of you, have had your plans and they have worked out just exactly like you wanted and they have gone far beyond what you could have thought. Well, recognize in that that

the power behind the success of your plans was not your wisdom and strength at all. The challenge for you if that's your life, is to give God the glory and not to attribute your success to your own strength and wisdom. You say, "I'm going to give God the glory for this success because I know that he is the one who has directed my steps and the only reason it worked out in the first place is that God moved in my heart to set those plans into place and now I look back, I see that he has blessed them, he gets all of the glory."

That's the easy part. Beloved, it's when the changes are painful and contrary to your plans, "This is not what I wanted. This is not what I wanted." When you find yourself in that spot, it's with equal humility that you say, "I'm going to receive this unpleasant providence with equal grace and trust in his character." Because, my friends, the truth of the matter is that what God withholds from you is as much an expression of his grace as what he gives to you and you accept the change because you trust this good God to work all things together for good.

Now understand this, and I'm going to wrap it up here. They promised me that this clock here was broken but it's not. I know I'm out of time. Understand this, beloved, and this was so helpful to me to come to grips with this and to understand it: when God changes your plans and providence intervenes and life works out so much differently and your life goes down a different road than what you had anticipated, that is not a sign that something has gone wrong. That's not a sign that something has gone wrong. The fact that you had one idea of how you were going to serve God with your life and it didn't work out, that's not a sign that something went wrong. It's not a sign that you have failed. You see, your godliness is not measured by whether your life works out in accordance with the goals of your youth. The goals of your youth were simply provisional plans in the hand of God that he took and directed to something different than what you had anticipated at the start. So your godliness is not measured by the conformity of your life to the plans of your youth, it's measured by how you respond to the circumstances that God actually brought about in your life. That's something that you can do something about. That's something that you can control, in a sense. You can respond in faith and trust and love and obedience to the reality of circumstances. You can't change the past and so stop worrying about it.

And I say that to encourage you. You don't have to rehearse all of your past decisions and second guess what you did at this or that juncture in your life. God's grace hasn't failed you. God didn't lose sight of you when you made that wrong decision or even when you strayed into the paths of sin. That was wrong for you to do that but even in that, God works even through our sins and our failures to accomplish his purposes in our lives and that is a blessed place of rest and trust that is the prerogative of every true Christian. And when God changes your plans, you should view those immediately as. "This is an unexpected means of God's grace in my life." That's what change is, unexpected change is simply an unexpected means of God's grace in your life.

So what I'm about to say here, I say with much love in my heart for you. Understand this, beloved: you must love the Lord Jesus Christ more than you love your plans. You must love him more than your plans by which I mean you must be content in Christ even

though life isn't what you had hoped. You must love him more than your plans in the sense that you pursue the life that God has actually given to you rather than the one that you wish you had received but you didn't. Ultimately you are living for the life to come anyway. This is just a little parenthesis between God's eternal choice of you in Christ and the eternal glories in heaven that await us. This is just a little parenthesis. This is just a detail.

Beloved, rest in the reality that God directs the steps of his people. The Apostle Paul says, "I'm forgetting what lies behind and I'm reaching forward to what lies ahead. I'm reaching forward to the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." God knows what he's doing. God has directed your steps to this very moment tonight and he hasn't made a mistake. So what you do is you trust the province that has orchestrated your life circumstances now and you look forward, you reach forward to the prize that lies ahead, and you trust him, and you embrace him. You plan your way but you plan it in dependence on the one who is overall and designs your good in all that comes to pass.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we do trust you for your goodness and as we recognize the disappointments of the past and the opportunities of the future, right now, Father, all we care about is to seek to know our Savior Jesus Christ and to be faithful to him. Father, bless this great congregation in the assurance of the forgiveness of sin, the hope of future glory and, Father, lead them to the understanding and the trust that comes from the knowledge that you have fitted them perfectly to glorify you in their present circumstances. Give us all grace to that end, Father, as we honor your name. For the sake of Christ we pray. Amen.*

You have been listening to Pastor and Teacher Don Green. For more information about the ministry of the Grace Life Pulpit, visit at [www.thegracelifepulpit.com](http://www.thegracelifepulpit.com). Please note law prohibits the unauthorized copying or distributing of this audio file. Request for permission to copy or distribute are made in writing to the Grace Life Pulpit. Copyright by Don Green. All rights reserved.